

# Spark Gap

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## Volunteer Radio Amateurs “Part of the Solution,” FCC Katrina Panel Told



ARRL Alabama SM Greg Sarratt, W4OZK (second from left), testifies before the FCC Katrina response panel meeting March 7 in Jackson, Mississippi.

*The Official Newsletter of the Mid-State Amateur Radio Club*



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NEWINGTON, CT, Mar 9, 2006—Addressing the FCC independent panel reviewing Hurricane Katrina’s impact on communication networks, ARRL Alabama Section Manager Greg Sarratt, W4OZK, praised Amateur Radio’s ability to get the job done. Speaking March 7 at Jackson State University in Mississippi, Sarratt said

Amateur Radio volunteers were tremendously effective in their ability to re-establish communication links using their own gear or by building systems from scratch.

“Amateur Radio operators themselves were part of the solution, providing experienced communications operators to replace and supplement local public service communications personnel in the devastated area,” Sarratt said. “These systems of equipment and operators were very effective, not only for amateur purposes but in support of emergency management, Red Cross, Southern Baptist, Salvation Army and many other organizations.”

FCC Chairman Kevin J. Martin and Commissioner Deborah T. Tate attended the opening session of the 25-member panel March 6. For 37 days following Hurricane Katrina, Sarratt—working at an American Red Cross disaster relief staging area in Montgomery, Alabama—headed the volunteer effort to process Amateur Radio volunteers headed to the Gulf Coast to assist recovery operations. Sarratt told the FCC panel that his operation ultimately was able to process and deploy more than 200 Amateur Radio volunteers from

35 states and Canada to devastated communities in Mississippi. Volunteers set up communication facilities at kitchens, shelters, emergency operations centers, distribution centers, warehouses and various command and control centers, he said.

“In each town we set up a high frequency (HF) Amateur Radio station to communicate out of the area to Montgomery and the outside world,” Sarratt explained. “We also set up a communications network connecting every Red Cross facility in a town on a local short-range radio frequency. Our network included

fixed and mobile disaster vehicle stations.”

Sarratt told the FCC panel that interoperability is the most important thing Amateur Radio can bring to the table in emergency and disaster communications. “Amateurs demonstrated their adaptability by communicating successfully with a multitude

of amateur, commercial, public service, EMA, Salvation Army and Red Cross radio systems and personnel,” he said.

### A Wealth of Resources

Sarratt said the hundreds of Amateur Radio volunteers in the field following Hurricane Katrina “made up the largest Amateur Radio Emergency Service army in history to provide critical emergency communications support.” Many Amateur Radio volunteers worked from home to support field operations, he noted. “We deployed several hundred thousand dollars worth of equipment and resources to the area,” Sarratt told the FCC panel. “Individual amateurs and dozens of Amateur Radio manufacturers donated thousands of dollars of radio equipment and resources.” Ham radio

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## Katrina Update

# “Hello” Campaign Provides Rallying Point to Promote Amateur Radio

NEWINGTON, CT, Mar 15, 2006—The first components of the ARRL’s “Hello” Amateur Radio public relations campaign now are available. “This campaign will give hams the tools they need to reach out in their communities to non-hams and influence their perception of Amateur Radio,” says ARRL Media and Public Relations Manager Allen

Pitts, W1AGP, who conceived the campaign and is its principal Headquarters contact. The “Hello” campaign is aimed at recasting Amateur Radio in the light of the 21st century and focus on its universal appeal. At the same time, it will mark the 100th anniversary of what many historians consider the first voice radio broadcast in 1906 by Reginald Fessenden.

“For years, ARRL public information officers (PIOs) and others interested in promoting Amateur Radio have been looking for leadership and a rallying point from which we can join together in a major promotion for ham radio,” Pitts said. This is it! Tools include a distinctive “Hello” Web site and radio and TV public service announcements.

Pitts describes the promotion is “quite simply the largest PR campaign that ham radio has ever attempted.” Based on the word “Hello,” which he calls “possibly the most pleasant word in any language,” the coordinated campaign will set “a positive, upbeat tone that highlights the international capabilities of Amateur Radio,” he explained. The “Hello” Web site is designed for non-hams to learn a little bit about Amateur Radio and to arouse more interest, Pitts explains. “We stay upbeat, positive and hopeful. Nothing threatening, too difficult or scary is included.”

## Offering a Warm Welcome

Pitts says the site points prospective Amateur Radio licensees to groups that have indicated

they will provide a warm welcome to newcomers—a good “Hello!” The national “Hello” campaign can bring curious people into contact with ham radio groups, but it will be up to local radio amateurs to make them truly welcome, Pitts maintains.

“The key to creating a new ham operator is to develop a relationship with a current ham operator,” says Pitts, who spent the better part of the past year meeting with various ham radio groups and leaders to sort out “what could realistically be done” to make the campaign take off. Behind the effort is “an army of dedicated, truly motivated PIOs and others who want to see ham radio flourish,” Pitts says.

“I believe that by placing good tools into your hands, you will use this opportunity to the fullest,” he added. “There will be more to come as the year unfolds.”

## What’s Available Now?

A series of 30-second radio public service announcements (PSAs) has been developed for the “Hello” campaign. The plan is make a new one available about every eight weeks. These “mini-commercials” for ham radio are already being played on dozens of stations across the country, and the numbers keep

growing.

“You can help by downloading the PSAs from the ARRL Web site onto a CD and taking it to your own local radio station,” Pitts suggests. A broadcast-quality video for the “Hello” campaign will be available in April.

Copies of the special four-page “Hello” brochure are available from ARRL Headquarters for use during presentations to non-ham groups. (Full details on the “Hello” campaign plus a pull-out copy of the brochure are available in the April issue of QST.) Pitts suggests the brochures are suitable for talks to schools, clubs, displays and other venues promoting Amateur Radio to the public. There is a space on the back page to add your local club info.



## Officers

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## Amateur Radio Celebrates 100 Years

## Part of the Solution...

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volunteers or clubs supplied self-contained communication vans and trailers that were effectively utilized in the disaster area, he added.

"Radio amateurs bring a wealth of resources to the public service and emergency communications table," Sarratt summed up.

### **Getting Ready for the Next "Big One"**

"The ARRL and Amateur Radio will continue to prepare, train, practice and test ourselves for the next event," Sarratt told the FCC panel. "Public service is a large component of the charter of the Amateur Radio Service." He recommended installing permanent Amateur Radio stations in federal, state and local emergency operations centers as well as at selected public service, Red Cross chapters and other served agencies.

Sarratt offered several recommendations for the League to pursue:

Setting up additional training and management of a special corps of "first-responder amateur operators" who can immediately deploy to a disaster area and setup vital communication.

Raising the awareness of Amateur Radio within government, emergency management and first-responder circles.

Establishing a nationally recognized credential system, possibly a FCC credential issued to each responder, so ham radio volunteers can gain ready acceptance by emergency managers and first responders.

Sarratt also put forth some recommendations for the FCC panel to consider. He suggested that the Commission and the ARRL:

collaborate to issue FCC credentials to the ARRL for Amateur Radio responders.

be key partners in an Amateur Radio awareness program for multiple government agencies and the first-responder community.

continue working together on critical frequency spectrum protection and interference-avoidance issues.

"The disasters of 2005 have proven the worth of Amateur Radio Service and its selfless cadre of operators; we were tested as never before," Sarratt concluded, adding "we must assume the next 'big one' is just around the corner."

"It was my pleasure meeting and working with hundreds of Amateur Radio operators during this event," he said. "I am proud to have been a part of this relief effort."

ARRL provided a written report to the independent FCC review panel. ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, recently named Sarratt to serve on the ARRL National Emergency Response Planning Committee.

## Technician license class started March 7

The annual MARC ham radio license class began on Tuesday, March 7, at the Johnson County EOC (this is the same location as the monthly club meetings). Classes will run 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM for the six to eight weeks, with extra time after 8:00 PM for those wanting to stick around for hands-on demonstrations of useful and interesting ham skills such as How to Solder, Simple Homemade Antennas, Morse Code demo, and practice license exams.

This class is taught by Ernest Clark, KB9SKI, and by its end students should be able to pass the examination for the Technician license. Motivated students frequently pass the exam weeks earlier. Morse code is not required for a Technician license.

The class is FREE. The class textbook is *Now You're Talking*, 5th Edition, published by the American Radio Relay League for \$20, or available through the class at the instructor's discount of \$15. To reserve a copy, or to ask any questions, contact the instructor at [hamclass@midstatehams.org](mailto:hamclass@midstatehams.org).

Club members—spread the news. Tell your friends, tell your neighbors, tell anyone who has ever been curious about the forest of antennas about your house and vehicle, that the chance and the time are coming, starting March 7.

**WA9RDF**  
**Repeater**  
**146.835/**  
**146.235 MHz**  
**151.4 Hz PL**  
**Tone**

**Weekly Net**  
**Every Sunday**  
**at 7PM EST**

***Tune in to hear***  
***the ARRL***  
***Newsline!***

## Weekly Net

Make sure to check out our weekly net, held every Sunday at 1900 (7 PM) local time. This is a great chance to meet other local amateur radio operators and test your operating skills. Newline is often played, allowing net participants to get the latest news about the amateur radio hobby. For those without the license or means to check in over the air, we offer an email check-in. Just send an email with your name and contact information to [netcontrol@midstatehams.org](mailto:netcontrol@midstatehams.org) and we will record your check-in!

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# 2006 Schedule of Events

## Public Service Events and/or Educational/Testing Opportunities

### MARCH 2006

#### 18 **MARC Meeting**

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

#### 18 **Central Indiana Severe Weather Symposium**

Creekside Middle School, Carmel, IN

#### 21 **Technician Class; 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

#### 25 **Columbus HamFest** (Columbus Amateur Radio Club)

Community Building at 4-H Fairgrounds, , State Route 11, Columbus, IN

#### 25 **Spring Fling Hamfest** (Michigan City ARC)

Diamond Cove, 716 US HWY 212, Michigan City, IN

#### 28 **Technician Class; 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

### APRIL 2006

#### 4 **Technician Class; 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

#### 11 **Red Cross Disaster Radio Group Meeting**

Red Cross Chapter, Indianapolis, IN

#### 11 **Technician Class; 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

#### 15 **MARC Meeting**

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

#### 15 **Mini-Marathon 15K Pre-Race**

Indianapolis, IN (Contact Mike Palmer, N9FEB, [www.indyham.org](http://www.indyham.org) for more info)

#### 18 **Technician Class; 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

#### 25 **Technician Class; 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

#### 29 **Johnson County Emergency Management Drill**

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

### Mid-State Amateur Radio Club

The Mid-State Amateur Radio Club meets the **THIRD SATURDAY** of each month in the basement of the Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, Indiana 46131.

See our website, [www.midstatehams.org](http://www.midstatehams.org), for maps on how to get to our meeting.